

THE
OPENING OF THE CASE

IN SUPPORT OF THE

EDWARD LAW, ESQ.
PETITIONS

OF THE

MERCHANTS OF LONDON AND LIVERPOOL,

AGAINST

THE BILL

"TO PROHIBIT THE TRADING FOR SLAVES ON THE COAST OF
AFRICA WITHIN CERTAIN LIMITS."

By EDWARD LAW, Esq.

AT THE BAR OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON TUESDAY, MAY 28, 1799.

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S P E E C H

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MY LORDS,

I HAVE the honour to attend your Lordships as counsel on behalf of the Planters and Merchants trading to, and interested in, the trade of the West Indies; and I also have the honour to attend your Lordships on behalf of the Merchants trading from Liverpool: and as the topics to be discussed on both these petitions in a considerable degree mix and blend themselves together, I will take the liberty of addressing your Lordships, at the same time, upon the whole subject, blended and mixed together as it is, upon both these petitions.

On the part of the Merchants of Liverpool, interested as they deeply are in this most valuable and important commerce, I am instructed to deprecate the passing into a law a Bill which, if it does so pass, will have the effect of destroying a trade which has furnished not only maintenance and support to a great part of his Majesty's subjects, but has furnished a most ample revenue, at a time when revenue is certainly no inconsiderable object of the attention of Parliament; has furnished strength and stability to the country, by

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supplying it with the greatest body of the ablest and best sailors, that are drawn from any source from which the marine derives support—I beg leave to say, I have to attend your Lordships on behalf of persons who offer, on their own account, and on the account of the public, these strong and irresistible claims to your Lordships' attention.

My Lords, the trade of the town of Liverpool, in the single article of slaves, occupies no less than one hundred and forty vessels, which vessels, when equipped with a proper cargo for Africa, are of the value—(taking them upon an average) of 12,000*l.* each; so that the whole of these ships, with their outfits, constitute a capital employed in the trade of at least 1,600,000*l.*; and after these ships have been employed in that trade, and return home, in their then state, and considering them merely as ships about to be again employed, they constitute a capital of 320,000*l.* being of the average value of 2300*l.* each. The number of sailors employed on board these ships amounts to at least five thousand men: when I say sailors, I include landmen, for this trade is a productive nursery for seamen, inasmuch as half the crew of every ship consists of landmen then first beginning to be educated in the business of a sea-faring life, and to become seamen. In that respect, this trade furnishes and affords the best and largest nursery for seamen of any branch of our national commerce. On these grounds, and being, as the trade and town of Liverpool is, connected with the commerce of the large manufacturing country that immediately surrounds it; connected immediately with the trade of Manchester and the populous and commercial neighbourhood of that place; connected also in exports with the trade of Birmingham—I have to state to your Lordships, that in appearing here for the Petitioners from the town of Liverpool so connected, I appear here for

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a class of persons who have at hazard, upon the determination which your Lordships shall form upon this Bill, perhaps the largest mass of commercial interest (except only that which is hazarded by another body of persons for whom I also stand here, namely, the Merchants and Planters of the West Indies) that can possibly be put in peril by any legislative experiment whatever.

My Lords, these persons may, on account of the magnitude of their interest, certainly claim a right to national attention; they conceive also that the commerce itself is not liable to any part of the imputation and blame which has been malignantly cast upon it. Every thing which the provident care of the Legislature has for a series of years suggested as necessary for meliorating the condition of the persons who are the objects of this traffic, in the course of their conveyance from Africa to the West Indies, has been fully acceded to on their part: they have willingly complied with every thing that has had the shape of beneficial regulation, and which could reasonably be said to have had humanity for its object; but at the time when they are resisting a Bill which, under the pretext of merely narrowing and contracting the limits of a trade suggested to be too extensive, is directly aimed at its destruction (whether that be the purpose of those who introduce and press forward the present measure, is immaterial to the parties who are to be the sufferers by it), they feel and know, and are prepared by evidence to prove and to communicate to your Lordships' minds the same feeling and knowledge, that the inevitable consequence of this bill, if it should pass into a law, will be to produce not only the total destruction of the trade in those parts to which this commerce is meant to be interdicted, but a languid, ineffectual, and unprofitable continuance of it every where else. And that I may not be supposed, on their behalf, to launch these observations without sufficient foundation in

fact, I will immediately state to your Lordships on what grounds the persons employed in this trade so think, so know, and will so prove. It is the object of this Bill, in terms indeed, to limit the trade, so as to exclude every British subject engaged in this branch of commerce from all approach to that part of the continent of Africa which lies on the western side of a line to be drawn from the southernmost point of Cape Palmas running due north of the said cape, or from entering, for the purposes of traffic, any river, creek, harbour, port, haven, or roadstead thereof, or from being found elsewhere at sea within five leagues of the said coast.

My Lords, if this Bill shall pass, not only that coast which is most conveniently adapted to the supply of slaves, will be wrested from the trade, but there will be a total impossibility of pursuing, with any effect, the rest of the trade to the ulterior parts of the coast: this will be the immediate, necessary, and inevitable consequence of the prohibition meant to attach on the Windward, and indeed upon the whole coast of Africa, between the Windward Coast and the Mediterranean, the whole of which is severed from the trade by this Bill: it severs from it a full third, in extent, of coast, or if less in space than that proportion, it severs at least one third of the whole valuable means of supply for this trade; for it not only deprives the West India islands, which depend upon this trade for their supply of negroes, of one third of such supply in point of number, but it deprives them of much more than a third in point of value; as the negroes on the Windward Coast are best accommodated by nature and by habits, to field and other labour similar to that in which they are occupied when removed to the West Indies: it likewise stands recommended as peculiarly fit to be the place from whence slaves should be taken, on account of its greater proximity to this country; and it is rather extraordinary that

it should have escaped the friends of humanity, who have, no doubt from the purest and most benevolent motives, so strongly interested themselves in support of this Bill, that the passage of slaves from the Windward Coast is shorter by one half than their conveyance from either Angola, Bonney, the Bight of Benin, or any other part of the coast from which slaves are conveyed. If therefore an humane attention to the condition of the slave be the real operating motive with them, and not a purpose of only crippling and destroying the trade, surely the interests of humanity would be best consulted by allotting to the slave the shortest and most convenient transit to the place of his destination;—and yet the distance from the country about Cape Mount and Cape Palmas to the West India islands, compared with that from Bonney, the Bight of Benin, Angola, and the other places from whence slaves are taken, constitutes a difference in the length of voyage from one month to eight or nine weeks; and every body who has yet considered the subject knows, that if there be any circumstance in the trade which requires particular improvements, and upon which one pauses with particular regret, it is upon the inconveniences that naturally may, and indeed inevitably must, be endured in the course of the middle passage. And yet it is the direct and positive effect of this measure—I do not say it is the intention of the promoters of it, because I suppose such honourable persons can have none but the most virtuous and humane intentions; but I am nevertheless warranted, on behalf of the Petitioners, to state, that the inevitable effect of this misguided policy will be to lengthen the voyage in the proportion I have mentioned, and by that means to enhance all the inconveniences which these unfortunate persons endure in the course of their conveyance: instead therefore of considering it as a measure of humanity, it appears to me to have a direct and mischievous tendency to augment unnecessarily

cessarily the sufferings of our fellow-creatures; and if I could be heard on their behalf, I would, as counsel on behalf of the aggregate body of inhabitants of the coast of Africa, earnestly contend against this Bill, and implore your Lordships to reject it wholly. It has not only the inconvenience attending it of a protracted length of voyage, but it will disable the parties prosecuting this commerce from supplying themselves with the articles fittest for the sustenance of the negro in the course of his subsequent conveyance to the West Indies; for it is from this very Windward Coast, from whence we are proposed to be interdicted, that rice and other necessary articles of provision for the slave-ships are alone to be obtained: and not only persons who mean to acquire slaves there, but all other persons who may happen to own slaves, acquired on other parts of the coast, are interdicted from coming within five leagues of the prohibited shore, though for the mere purpose of obtaining a necessary supply of food for those slaves. Besides, there is a further inconvenience, which will be the necessary result of this Bill if it passes into a law—that it will disable from the safe prosecution of the voyage all persons going beyond the Windward Coast to any further part of Africa; for I am able to prove by the fullest evidence at your Lordships' bar, that it is absolutely necessary for persons going to any parts of the coast which are resorted to for the purpose of obtaining slaves, to come within a near distance of the land, indeed to come close in with it, in some part of the Windward Coast between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas, from the whole of which line of coast the African trader is to be interdicted by this Bill; for without coming so near the land as will enable them to know their bearings, without coasting for a considerable way along it, and even in many instances without having actual communication with the natives on shore (which is effected by making signals to them, in consequence of which they come off in their boats), it is impossible for the sailor to know where he is

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situated, to ascertain his longitude, and upon so flat a shore as the Windward Coast is, to steer clear of the dangerous point of Cape Palmas with any degree of certainty or safety. To preclude all persons engaged in the slave-trade, as this Bill attempts to do, from coming within five leagues of that part of the coast of Africa, would be to oblige every man prosecuting his voyage to the Leeward Coast of Africa, to prosecute it at the risk of shipwreck, and all the horrid consequences of such a calamity; and that this will be the effect of the intended prohibition I shall prove by many persons conversant in the trade, who have made the voyage repeatedly, and who will agree in telling your Lordships, that unless they are allowed a liberty of access to the coast of Africa within the limits now meant to be interdicted them, they cannot prosecute the remainder of their voyage with any reasonable degree of safety or certainty.

Both these points, which are equally made the subject of complaint in the Petition of the Merchants of Liverpool, and of the Merchants trading to the West Indies, do, I submit, afford pregnant matter of objection to this Bill on the score of humanity and of national policy, as well as on the score of the private interest of individuals, which will be sacrificed thereby. I do not know whether I should be correct in addressing to your Lordships, arguments founded on considerations of more general policy; but confining myself within a narrower range, and adverting only to the effects which it will have on the immediate interest of the slave-trader, I see a voyage increased and lengthened from four to eight weeks, with an accumulation of expense thrown upon the trade, and an accumulation of inconvenience and discomfort heaped upon the objects of the traffic, without a single circumstance of advantage to compensate them.

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My Lords, I have stated that one part of the voyage is lengthened, and the other part of it rendered almost, if not wholly, impracticable; and, at the same time, the persons fittest for the condition assigned to negroes, both in the middle passage, and on their arrival in the West Indies, are to be excluded from it. Every body that is acquainted with Africa and the West Indies, knows that the Windward Coast slave requires infinitely less training to fit him for the business of that life in which he is occupied on his arrival in the West Indies, than the slave of any other district or description, with the exception of a few slaves on the Gold Coast only; and to exhibit to your Lordships' view, as strongly as it can be, the superior docility and usefulness of these slaves, witnesses will be called to your Lordships' bar, who will tell you, that with no more than eleven or twelve white men on board, they have taken in cargoes of between two and three hundred negroes from this part of the coast; that they have trained them to the use of small arms, have made them useful assistants in working the guns, and handing and managing the ropes and sails of the ship, insomuch that they have sustained very severe offensive and defensive operations against the enemy, by the skill, fidelity, activity, and valour of these slaves, who, if they were treated in the way we have been desired to believe they are treated, it is impossible to believe that they would not, from mere motives of natural revenge, have turned their weapons upon their oppressors, and have used them for the destruction, instead of the defence, of the persons who had thus armed them; and yet your Lordships will find these men have fought manfully, vigorously, zealously, and effectually, by the side of the slave-master, and have at last carried off their vessels in safety from the dangers which had surrounded and menaced them. This has happened in many instances in respect to slaves from the Windward and Gold Coasts; I state it however at present, only to show the superior fitness of the slave of this part of the

the coast for the condition and uses of life to which he is destined, at the same time that it refutes a great deal of what has been, I will venture to say, most calumniously stated respecting the treatment of these persons in the course of their passage to the West Indies.

A great object professed to be sought, and to be attainable through the medium of this Bill, is the civilization and improvement of the inhabitants of Africa. The Sierra Leone Company is suggested to have made some advance towards the attainment of this object; and it is supposed that its further efforts for this purpose will be weakened and obstructed if the slave-trade is not prohibited on this part of the coast, conceiving that this trade directly clashes with the success of those efforts. I apprehend, however, that civilization in Africa is only to be effected by the ordinary human means of African commerce; and that species of it which produces the largest system of connexion between man and man, which familiarizes them the most to one another, which has the greatest effect in exciting and whetting the activity of the mind and passions, and in giving them a direction to objects of a general and interesting nature, is that which most tends, in the first instance, to produce that rudier state of preparatory civilization, which must take place before man can be rendered capable of receiving even the elementary parts of common education, much more the higher lessons of social and moral duty. The savage of the desert must be taught first to be a man; and he can only be taught this lesson, in any degree, by others who have already in some sort learnt it: the only school in which it is there learnt is the school of commerce. Other branches of commerce in that country are too minute and insignificant to produce much intercourse and communication between man and man; so that the civilization which can alone be attained in Africa by commerce, must be so through the only general, extensive, and sufficiently interesting

commerce which that country possesses, the slave-trade; and I venture to lay it down as a fundamental position, that it is impossible to carry on any species of commerce in that country with adequate advantage, unless mixed with and assisted by the trade in slaves.

The efforts which have been made (with the best intentions no doubt) by the Sierra Leone Company, are puerile in the extreme; and at this moment that Company owes its preservation and existence to that which it has improperly regarded as its bitterest enemy. At this moment the only considerable article of trade which they procure is ivory, which is brought down on the heads and backs of slaves from the upper countries, and is thus immediately procured through the medium of this very slave-trade; and even the slave-trade itself they are indirectly concerned in, in another way, that is, by a barter of slave-goods for ivory; otherwise they could not hold even the temporary and precarious footing they do hold upon the coast of Africa.

The gentlemen of the Sierra Leone Company have no means of purchasing ivory, but what has been brought down the country in the manner I have described; and the means of bringing it down would be wanting, if the slave did not bring both it and himself to the same market, at the same time. What I have said of ivory holds equally true as to gums and other articles which constitute the other inferior branches of trade in Africa: but these articles are altogether of such comparative insignificance, that it is impossible for the whole trade of that country, if confined to them, to occupy more than one single vessel of three hundred tons: nay, the whole trade of Africa, exclusive of dying-woods and slaves, would not, I am told, occupy a vessel even of that size, and exclusive of slaves only, and including Cam-wood, gum, Malaguetta pepper; in short, all the other articles that are collected and bought in Africa: all

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these articles collectively (of which the dying-woods alone are a commodity of any considerable bulk), all of them, I understand, would not occupy more than six or seven vessels. This has already been in evidence before your Lordships, when your Lordships gave a long and laborious attention to this subject during a great number of sittings in the years 1792, 1793, and part of 1794, when I had the honour of attending at your Lordships' bar. The evidence delivered upon that occasion is in print; and upon referring to that, as well as to the recollection I retain of the investigation which took place at that period, I am satisfied that the trade, exclusive of slaves, will turn out to be of this limited nature; and that it would be perfectly impossible for any African trade at all to subsist, so as adequately to compensate the adventurer, and therefore to be a trade at all worth continuing, without allowing him the opportunity of acquiring slaves; for, in truth, the other commodities of the country only come down with and as a kind of make-weight to the capital and only valuable trade in slaves. Then is this very valuable trade, occupying, as it does, such a number of ships, giving sustenance to so many thousand individuals, producing such a large revenue to the country, giving such means of security to the country and supply to its navy, as it does—is this valuable trade to be sacrificed for the nominal benefit of a trading factory, so puny and so impotent, that if you withdraw the protection of the negro slave trade from it, it will expire in its own cradle? It is impossible that there can remain a doubt, after the evidence I shall produce, in the mind of any Noble Lord, that this sickly trade owes its subsistence, protection, and the only meagre nourishment it has at present, to the very traffic which it reprobates.

The slave-trader who had embarked this large capital, and the employment of whose capital so much interests the country, is not the

the only party, as I have stated, who deprecates the passing of this Bill into a law; the Merchants and Planters in the West Indies feel, that they will thereby be cut off from their best source and supply of slaves. If humanity is so much alive, and upon the watch to find out the inconveniences of this trade, it might as well have called a little discretion to its aid; and if any part of the trade was cut off, have cut off that which was prosecuted with most disadvantage to the trader and to the object of the traffic—I mean the trade from the coasts more remote, relatively both to this country and the West Indies. This trade is necessarily carried on at a greater comparative expense of labour and capital, with more danger and inconvenience of navigation, than the trade to the Windward Coast; and if the trader is to be precluded at all, or any where (which I seriously deprecate), it should be from Angola and those distant parts, and not from the more proximate coast, as I may call it, both to this country and to the West Indies. If there is to be an exclusion and interdiction of any part of the coast of Africa from this traffic, reason, policy, humanity, all demand that the part meant to be prohibited by this Bill should be the part left open to the traffic; and that the exception and exclusion should attach upon the part meant to be retained and preserved entire. I have already stated, how absolutely necessary it is to touch on that coast for supplies for the ulterior part of the voyage, in rice, and many other articles capable only of being purchased there; and for ascertaining the ship's longitude, the bearings of the coast, and the general safety of the ship and its crew.

My Lords, we are not the only nation engaged in this traffic. If we are to be excluded, into what hands does the trade fall? It will fall into the hands of other nations, eager and impatient to seize that which we are wantonly casting from us as an idle thing of no value,

value, into the hands of those who are already in part occupying it, but without the restraint of any of those humane provisions in favour of the objects of the traffic, which have so laudably occupied the attention of the Legislature in former sessions of Parliament. Can we suppose, that when we have left the most advantageous situation for the acquisition of slaves open to them, other nations would not rush in, and seize it as a vacant possession? And can we suppose, that the concerns of the Sierra Leone Company will be safer in the vicinity of such persons, than of their fellow-subjects the native traders of Great Britain, who are meant to be banished from the whole of this coast?

There is no benefit suggested that can accrue to any human being by this Bill, whether we consider the condition of the slave himself, or that of the purchaser of the slave. The person who is to vend him in the West Indies; the persons who are to purchase him there; we who are to consume the produce of his labour, when transmitted from the West Indies; all—all of us will be paying a heavy and enormous tax for the increased expense incurred in the exportation and conveyance of slaves during a lengthened voyage, without any advantage being derived to the interests of humanity in any one particular whatsoever.

I do not know that upon this occasion it much falls within the line of my duty to comment upon the immediate clauses of the Bill as such, inasmuch as they may be altered and modified hereafter; but as the means proposed in these clauses, for carrying the intended prohibition into effect, do more fully exhibit the mischief of the principle of the Bill, and render it more dangerous, from the penalties and forfeitures which follow in its train, I feel myself not only at liberty, but required, to observe somewhat upon them. The prohibition

bition enacted in the very first clause of the Act, introduces something extremely alarming and dangerous; for, not only any negroes who may have been purchased on this coast, or elsewhere at sea, within five leagues of the coast, but any negroes who accidentally arrive, and are brought within these limits, become instantly free: so that if a slave-ship shall be driven by stress of weather, or other accident, with any large number of slaves on board; and if they shall know of the provisions of this Bill (supposing it should pass into a law), they will instantly be invested with every right the freest man can claim or exercise, and might justifiably rise upon the persons who should attempt to restrain them in the enjoyment of their freedom.

This is in the first section. It prohibits not only all trade in slaves within those limits, but all property or ownership in them; for this Bill has a larger scope and comprehension, in this respect, than I ever remember to have met with in any other prohibitory bill: “It

“shall not be lawful to or for any British subject or subjects, to
 “buy or sell, or otherwise acquire or transfer, or to own or possess,
 “as a slave or slaves, within that part of the continent of Africa
 “which lies on the western side of a line drawn from the south-
 “ernmost point of Cape Palmas, running due north of the said
 “cape, or in any river, creek, harbour, port, haven,” &c.

The second section prohibits British subjects acquiring a property in slaves. It says, If any person shall be *by force, fraud, or otherwise*.—Now every thing acquired, is acquired by force, fraud, or *otherwise*; that is, *it is* acquired either by force or fraud, or *it is not* acquired by force or fraud. What meaning this particular specification of “force, fraud, or otherwise,” is intended to convey, I cannot well conceive: this alternative mode of acquisition, viz. by right or wrong, may be predicated of every thing that is acquired or possessed, from property of the highest value down to the inkstand
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before me. The Act says, "It shall not be lawful for any British subject or subjects to buy or sell, or otherwise acquire or transfer, own or possess, any slave brought from the prohibited district." Of course, if he cannot be the subject of property in another person, such negro is himself a freeman. Now, supposing in the island of Jamaica, or any other West India island, it shall be brought to my knowledge, as a planter, that a negro, having nothing in his complexion, dialect, or tone of voice, indicating the place of his birth; or which proved that he came from the west of this ideal line to be drawn from Cape Palmas, had been in fact acquired as a slave within the prohibited limits; how am I to act? That man is free, and it is a crime to coerce his services. And by other provisions in this Bill, if a person having a slave on board, who has been purchased within the prohibited distance, imports him, he imports him at the peril of the forfeiture and loss of his vessel; for the Act, in the seventh section, says, "Any person who shall knowingly and wilfully own or possess any slave contrary to the prohibitions of the Act, shall forfeit 200/." But I knowingly and wilfully own and possess a negro, from the moment I know he comes from a country in which the Legislature has said, there shall be no property acquired in slaves:—therefore, if I continue the owner, knowingly and wilfully, in the West Indies, of a slave, whom I had no concern in procuring within the prohibited limits; notwithstanding I have acquired him unknowingly, and notwithstanding that I cannot get rid of him without putting him to death; if I do own him, and if I am the ship-owner besides, the ship or vessel, in which he is imported into any of the West India islands, is forfeited: and if I own or possess him, not being also the owner of the ship or vessel, I incur a penalty of 200/. Now, the latter is a penalty which it is almost impossible not to incur. There is a provision in the latter part of the Act, that if the party shall prove that such owning, possessing, taking

taking on board, carrying, conveying, unshipping, landing, or bringing, was for the necessary preservation of such slave or slaves, or was involuntary and for inevitable cause, then it is to be admitted as a defence against the penalty claimed.

Now, how can I, who, in Jamaica for instance, have become the proprietor of a slave, whom I bought without any knowledge of the place and manner in which he was acquired; whom I bought, not for the necessary preservation of the slave (for his preservation was equally secure in the hands of his former master), not involuntarily, but voluntarily; not inevitably, but in the exercise of my own free will and pleasure upon the subject; how can I, thus circumstanced, bring myself within the terms of this exception? I submit that I cannot, and unless I can prove that I acquired him originally, or retain him now, for the necessary preservation of the slave, and that involuntarily and inevitably, I incur a forfeiture of the penalty of 200*l*.

My Lords, I stated to your Lordships just now, that I have the honour to appear at your Lordships' bar on behalf likewise of certain persons, who would be injured individually by being precluded from access to the coast where their property is deposited, consisting of large cargoes of slaves belonging to them. And if this Bill passes into a law, as it will be criminal for them to go to those places, they will of course be put out of the possibility of ever realizing or securing that property.

My Lords, this brings me to observe upon a clause, which certainly puts the persons who apply to your Lordships, complaining of the loss they sustain by being precluded from access to the coast, in the situation of persons entitled to object to the principle of this

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Bill, as a Bill holding out no compensation whatever for the losses it immediately and necessarily occasions, by its own provisions. The clause which should hold out compensation, as if drawn in a lassitude of penmanship, by the persons employed to draw it, stops short in the middle: there is not a word in the clause that gives effectual compensation, or the means of obtaining it, to any individual, to whatever extent such individual may be injured.

It provides, "That it shall and may be lawful for his Majesty, under his sign manual, to appoint three commissioners, who shall have power to receive and investigate upon oath, which they are thereby authorized to administer, any statement of losses that may be incurred in consequence of the operation of this Act, and which statements shall have been laid before them by any British subject or subjects possessing any factory or factories for slaves on that part of Africa in which the trade in slaves is by this Act prohibited, or trading for slaves to the said part; and the commissioners are hereby directed to lay before the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's treasury, and also before one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, an account of the actual losses which shall appear to them to have been sustained as aforesaid, by such British subject or subjects, with the evidence and vouchers authenticating the same." What then? When the commissioners shall have so done, the party is not a whit nearer his compensation. The Lords of the Treasury are not empowered by this Bill to apply a single penny to the indemnification of the claimant; and without some such power, I am sure there could be no such application: they are not empowered by this Bill to apply a single penny of the public money to the satisfaction of any individual loss; not only not empowered so to appropriate, but not even called upon to adjudicate upon the subject: but it is only provided, that there shall be laid before the Lords of the Treasury

and Secretaries of State an account of the actual loss. What then does the Bill do more than say, " You, Mr. Dawson of Liverpool, who are precluded from all access to a property of 30,000*l.* left upon this coast, as your petition states, will have the satisfaction of knowing that a state of it will be laid before the eminent persons already mentioned, and they may investigate it if they please; but when they have done so, they have no power to relieve you?" This, therefore, is a Bill, which wholly deprives him of his property, without affording him the prospect of any possible compensation whatsoever; it holds out no compulsory means of investigation, and no authorized mode of compensation whatsoever.

There are other clauses in the Bill which hold out a dreadful temptation to seize the property of persons suspected to be engaged in what is hereafter to be deemed an illicit purchase of slaves. Any person who seizes a ship, upon the alleged pretence of suspicion of the slaves on board being Windward Coast negroes, and a similitude in size, and in the form and fashion of the body, in dialect and complexion, with those persons, would lay a probable cause of seizure; much more so if the negroes found on board professed, as they may easily be induced to do, that they are natives of the prohibited district. These circumstances would furnish at once a probable cause of seizure, and would acquit the seizing party upon paying twopence damages, and no costs; and in this way will all the trade with the coast of Africa—a trade, upon which the supply of labourers for the West Indies so entirely depends—a trade, upon which the subsequent transmission of the produce of those islands to this country, and the very large revenue obtained thereby, depends—be at the mercy of the caprice or the avarice of indemnified and unamenable informers. This would surely be to expose the rights of private property, and the great

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national interests of trade, to a risk, to which, I trust, it will not consist with your Lordships' wisdom and justice to expose them.

I therefore take the liberty to insist and contend, that this will be a mischievous sacrifice to a short-sighted policy, and a misconceived principle of humanity: that, supposing it had been resolved, that some part of the trade should be suppressed or curtailed, humanity itself would struggle to retain, in preference, that part which the Bill before your Lordships is intended to annihilate; it would labour to preserve and separate (if any must be separated) the fonder, the better, the more practicable and more lenient part of the trade, from that which is, unavoidably and from natural causes only, in some degree less so. I think it will be evident to your Lordships, that if any part of this trade is to be suppressed (though, I trust, none will be so), it ought to be the part which is left, directly at least, untouched by the provisions of this Bill. But, my Lords, the abolition of any part of it does not rest upon any such principles of public policy, or upon any such real foundation of actual complaint upon the score of humanity, as will warrant your Lordships' wisdom in entertaining such a measure.

Are we now, by the omnipotence of an Act of the British Legislature, to begin the mighty work of altering the condition of man from the form in which it has existed universally in that part of the globe, from the time, I had almost said, of the deluge, shortly however after that period, to the present hour? Are we to new-cast and new-model the frame of the whole African world, to obtrude freedom on those who have no knowledge of its blessings, or disposition to acquire it? And are we to effect this great change in any degree by puny regulations, which can have no other immediate effect, than that of transferring the trade from one hand to another, by substituting

stituting foreign traders in the place of British traders, which latter, independent of our national character of humanity, must of course carry on the traffic with less convenience to the negroes, on account of the absence, in other countries, of those humane provisions, which this country, and the Houses of Assembly in the West India islands, in furtherance of the same policy, have made upon the subject? The trade which is meant to be partially abolished by this Bill, has been carried on for near two centuries upon the solemnly plighted faith of the Legislature and Government of Great Britain, in a multitude of acts of Parliament and acts of state; and this vast national concern and traffic is to be palsied, on one side at least, in favour of a Company, which, if it engrossed all the other trade of Africa, independent of the trade in slaves and dying-woods, could occupy with it all not more than three hundred tons of shipping; and even that miserable pittance of trade could not be obtained without the aid of this very slave-trade.

On these grounds, without detaining your Lordships longer, or detailing this subject more at length, particularly as I shall have an opportunity hereafter, of endeavouring at least to do away such impressions in favour of this measure, as may be made by the learning and talents of my friends who appear on behalf of the Sierra Leone Company, I shall bring your Lordships' present trouble to a close, by calling the witnesses I have alluded to in support of the several facts I have stated.

THE END.

